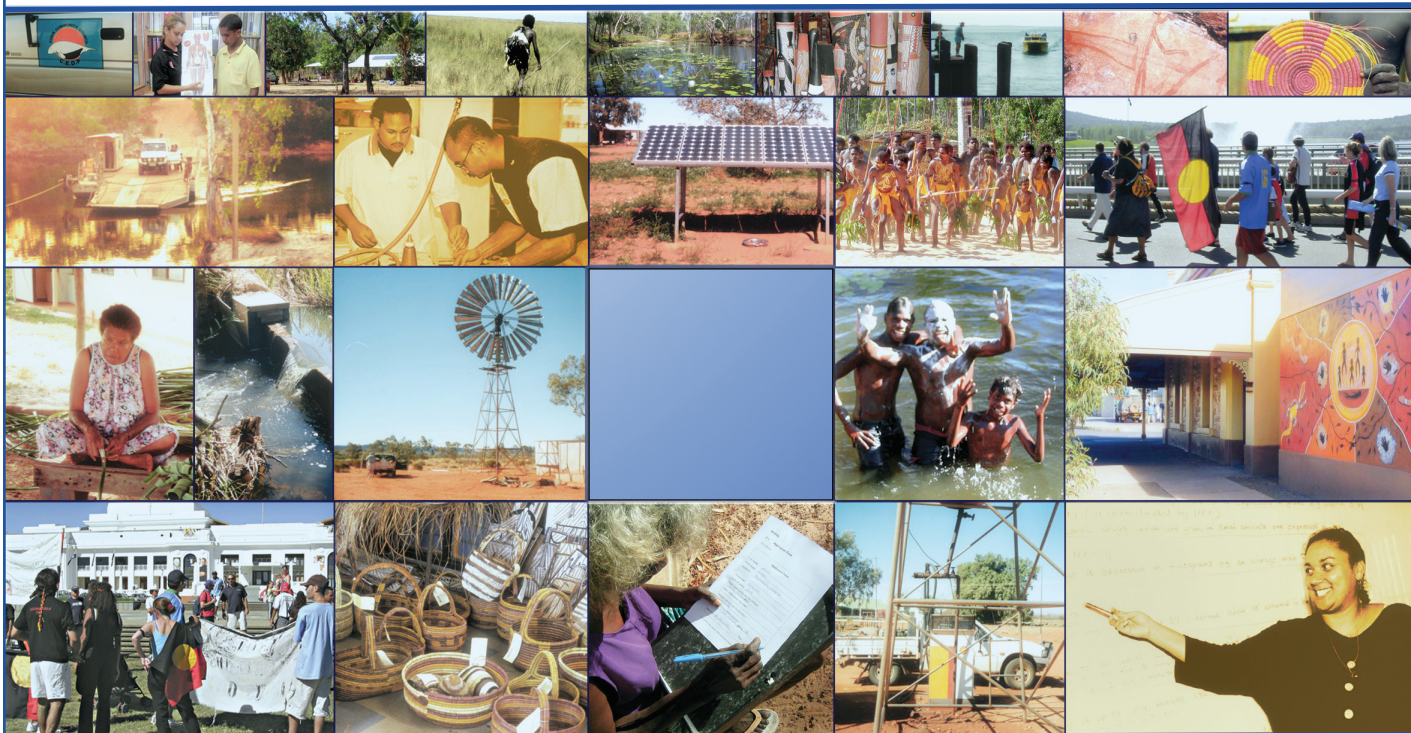


Developing a national Indigenous policy framework that recognises needs, rights and legacies and delivers results

J.C. Altman

CAEPR Topical Issue No. 02/2009



Developing a national Indigenous policy framework that recognises needs, rights and legacies and delivers results

Paper delivered to the Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS) National Conference, 'Building a Fair Australia in Tough Economic Times', Australian Technology Park, Sydney, on 2 April 2009

Jon Altman

Director and ARC Australian Professorial Fellow, Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research, Australian National University, Canberra; e-mail: jon.altman@anu.edu.au

INTRODUCTION

I would like to begin by acknowledging the Eora Nations, traditional owners of Sydney.

I have been researching Indigenous policy for just on 32 years now. Over time, Indigenous affairs have become more and more politicised, complicated, and influenced by the voices of popular media. We now have a relatively new federal government that has accepted the previous government's rhetoric of failure in Indigenous affairs, and also a degree of adherence to its approach, despite much talk about 'business as usual' being inadequate.¹

The national policy framework is based around two principles: a continuation of a focus on remote Australia, especially the Northern Territory Emergency Response (NTER) Intervention; and 'practical reconciliation' or mainstreaming, assimilation or normalisation—now termed 'Closing the Gap'—which has been the dominant tenet of policy for decades, irrespective of the government of the day.

There have been some changes: a national apology to the stolen generations and a recognition that a greater investment will be needed to close the gap; an important collaboration between Federal and State/Territory governments to more equitably and transparently share the cost of Indigenous affairs;² and tomorrow, a statement of support for the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, a highly symbolic act.

In the time I have today, I want to provide a dispassionate examination of where we are at, and where we might be going, in terms of outcomes for Indigenous Australians. I provide some statistics on Closing the Gap, while at the same time being critical of the policy adherence to this monolithic approach that privileges statistical equality over all else and so, inevitably, undervalues difference and diversity.³ I argue for a very different policy framework that looks to openly combine three interlinked elements:

1. Needs-based citizenship rights (what might be termed horizontal equity in welfare economics, or formal equality in international human rights law, or recognition of sameness);
2. Special Indigenous rights (vertical equity, substantive equality, or recognition of difference), and
3. Compensatory 'social justice' rights to meet historical backlogs.

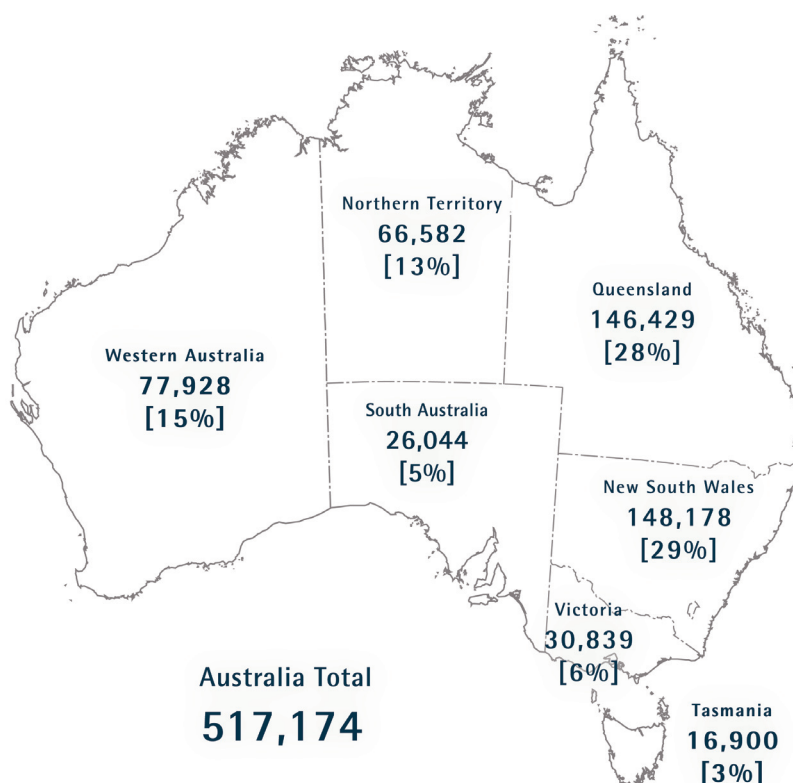
ACOSS:

Australian Council
of Social Service

NTER:

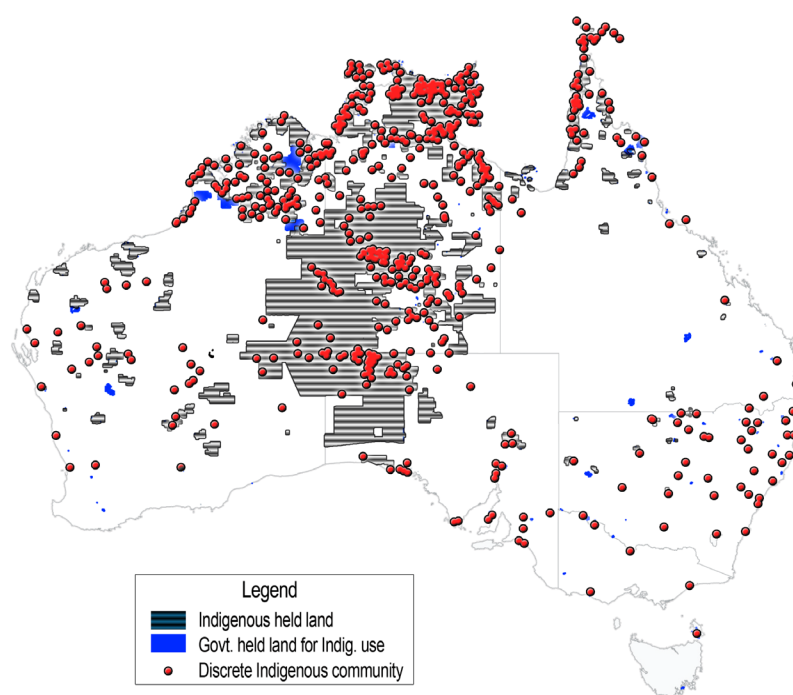
Northern Territory
Emergency
Response

Fig. 1. Indigenous estimated resident population, 2006



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006.

Fig. 2. Discrete Indigenous communities and Indigenous-owned land



Source: Adapted from Altman, Buchanan & Larsen, 2007.

Table 1. Ratio of Indigenous to non-Indigenous socioeconomic outcomes, 1971–2006

Variable	1971	1981	1991	1996	2001	2006
Unemployment rate (% labour force)	5.63	4.24	2.70	2.52	2.78	3.06
Employment to population ratio (% adults)	0.73	0.61	0.66	0.72	0.71	0.71
Private-sector employment (% adults)	0.65	0.42	0.51	0.47	n.a.	0.63
Labour force participation rate (% adults)	0.78	0.77	0.84	0.85	0.82	0.80
Median weekly personal income (\$A 2006)	n.a.	0.55	0.62	0.64	0.56	0.58
Household size	1.35	1.32	1.38	1.33	1.31	1.31
Median weekly household income (\$A 2006)	n.a.	0.72	0.77	n.a.	0.78	0.78
Home owner or purchasing (% population)	0.37	0.27	0.27	0.36	0.37	0.41
Never attended school (% adults)	37.83	15.29	5.10	4.43	3.20	3.00
Post-school qualification (% adults)	0.14	0.18	0.29	0.33	0.44	0.52
Degree or higher (% adults)	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	0.20	0.23	0.24
Attending educational institution (% 15–24 year olds)	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	0.56	0.61	0.62
Male life expectancy at birth (years)	0.73	0.79	0.77	0.76	0.74	n.a.
Female life expectancy at birth (years)	0.67	0.82	0.80	0.79	0.77	n.a.
Population aged over 55 years (%)	0.43	0.34	0.32	0.31	0.31	0.33
Note: 'n.a.' means that data was not available in that year. Results have been rounded to two decimal places.						
Source: Altman, Biddle & Hunter, 2008.						

I then want to also say a little about how Closing the Gap might fare during a global recession and to end by provocatively challenging ACOSS and its members to advocate a little differently for Indigenous development.

CLOSING THE GAP: A FOCUS ONLY ON NEEDS

Closing the gap in life expectancy, infant mortality rates, employment and educational outcomes is the current overarching policy framework.⁴ In some cases 'closing the gap' actually means halving the gap that is defined relationally, so that Indigenous disadvantage is defined *vis-à-vis* non-Indigenous statistical averages. The broad means to achieve these goals are three-fold: more dollars, more coercion, and more direct state involvement and oversighting.

Closing the Gap will be very difficult because resources are increasingly being targeted at remote Australia—where the minority of the Indigenous population lives—as if relative disadvantage is lower in non-remote or more densely settled Australia. Official statistics outlined below challenge such a view.

Fig. 1 shows the distribution of the Indigenous population by State and Territory to remind us all that New South Wales and Queensland are the most populous from an Indigenous population perspective, and that

Table 2. Key Socio-economic indicators by remoteness, 2006

Outcomes	Major Cities	Inner Regional	Outer regional	Remote	Very Remote
Unemployment rate (% of labour force)	3.0	3.3	3.6	4.7	1.2
Employment to population ratio (% adults)	0.8	0.7	0.7	0.6	0.5
Private sector employment (% employed)	0.9	0.9	0.9	0.8	0.6
Labour force participation rate (% adults)	0.9	0.9	0.8	0.7	0.6
Home owner or purchasing (% households)	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.4	0.2
Never attended school (% adults)	1.0	2.3	3.0	8.2	13.8
Post school qualifications (% adults)	0.6	0.6	0.5	0.4	0.2
Degree or higher (% adults)	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.2	0.1
Attending educational institution (% 15 - 24)	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.6
Population aged 55 years	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.4
Source: ABS Census data 2006, compiled by M. Yap.					

ABS:

Australian Bureau of Statistics

only 13 per cent of the Indigenous population resides in the Northern Territory. (These figures are called estimated resident population, or ERP; it is noteworthy that, in the 2006 Census, final Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) figures derived from post-enumeration surveys revealed a massive undercount of 24% for Western Australia, 19% for the Northern Territory, and 12.5% for Queensland.)⁵

Fig. 2 presents some information on the location of what are called discrete Indigenous communities: there are about 1,200 of these: only 17 have a population of over 1,000 people and nearly 900 have a population of less than 50. Most are located on Indigenous-owned or native title determined land that now covers over 20 per cent of Australia.⁶ About 100,000 Indigenous Australians live in such communities.⁷

This dispersal means two things. First it is very difficult to devise appropriate policies and programs for such small, isolated communities; and hard to deliver services (even census enumeration services). Second, because most members of these communities are ancestrally or historically linked to the land, people are strongly connected to the Indigenous estate, now legally recognised.

Table 1 presents some statistics on Indigenous disadvantage relative to non-Indigenous disadvantage at the national level. These data tell us that for as long as we have had statistics that allow self identification, Indigenous people have been relatively badly off compared to non-Indigenous people. What is important about these official statistics, however, is that because we have had them for a long time, we can hardly say we did not know that Indigenous people are relatively disadvantaged. But despite the rhetoric of failure, some of these ratios have improved while others have stagnated; certainly in absolute terms most *have* improved, but improvement takes a long time.⁸ Key issues are whether the ratios have improved fast enough, and is closing the statistical gap the key aspiration for all Indigenous people?

Table 3. Number of years till convergence of Indigenous and non-Indigenous outcomes

	Convergence based on long run trends since 1971	Convergence based on post-1996 trends
Unemployment rate (% labour force)	28	**
Employment to population ratio (% adults)	**	**
Private-sector employment (% adults)	**	23
Labour force participation rate (% adults)	100+	**
Median weekly personal income \$A (2006)	100+	**
Household size	100+	100+
Median weekly household income \$A (2006)	94	100+
Home owner or purchasing (% population)	100+	100+
Never attended school (% adults)	2	14
Post-school qualification (% adults)	44	25
Degree or higher (% adults)	n.a.	100+
Attending educational institution (% 15-24 year olds)	n.a.	63
Male life expectancy at birth (years)	100+	**
Female life expectancy at birth (years)	47	**
Population aged over 55 years (%)	**	100+
<p>Note: If Indigenous and non-Indigenous outcomes are diverging then the entry is a double asterisk. The trends are based on the maximum period for which comparable data was available. For example, the long run convergence for income calculated from 1981 as there were no available estimates for 1971. If the number of years to convergence is greater than 100 years, then the table entry is shown as 100+.</p> <p>Source: Altman, Biddle & Hunter, 2008.</p>		

Table 2 shows the ratio of Indigenous to non-Indigenous socio-economic outcomes by remoteness for 2006. This table is important because it shows quite clearly that Indigenous disadvantage is everywhere, not just in remote Australia. But some things are in fact far worse in remote and very remote Australia, suggesting that the government's focus there might be justified. However, an important proviso is required—these figures are averages. Recent research by Nicholas Biddle shows that there are pockets within major cities that are not dissimilar in disadvantage to remote regions.⁹ This table is also important because it shows the error of the naïve notion, held by some, that just migrating up the settlement hierarchy, and abandoning remote communities, will magically fix the 'Aboriginal problem'.

In Table 3, we estimate how long it will take to 'close the gaps' that can be measured with official statistics. These are just simple extrapolations from 1971 and 1996; the former the longest historical trend possible, the latter probably the more accurate.

Irrespective of which trend one uses, and making the assumption that policy settings will remain fundamentally unchanged, it is evident that only some gaps will totally close within a generation; some will take 100 years+ to close; and some are diverging, or were until 2006. That is, past evidence suggests

that some gaps will never close. This table is indicative only, but is produced to counsel caution in terms of the political rhetoric of 'closing the gap'. One result of the tough economic times ahead is that non-Indigenous outcomes might decline markedly, thus assisting statistical gap closing *if* Indigenous outcomes remain constant.

Closing the Gap is about meeting citizenship entitlement or rights—what in welfare terms might be referred to as horizontal equity or the like treatment of all citizens. Clearly as a nation we have done poorly here for many historical, structural, cultural and political reasons.

WHAT ABOUT SPECIAL RIGHTS?

Australia's forms of democracy and fiscal federalism have not served Indigenous people well, suggesting that Indigenous-specific programs might be needed. Indigenous-specific programs are fundamentally different but should, in theory at least, be supplementary to equal access to mainstream programs so as to hasten closing of gaps. At the moment there is almost \$4 billion of such programs, and one often hears provocative media comment that this amount is excessive. In fact, it represents about 1.4 per cent of Commonwealth outlays for about 2.5 per cent of the Australian population. And the assumption is made that this is on top of equitable needs-based access to mainstream entitlements, when in truth, we do not know the extent of Indigenous people's access to such services.¹⁰ There are indications and research that suggests that it is inadequate. The indications come from places where mainstream services are just not available, especially in remote and very remote regions. Research indicates that on any objective needs basis criteria, access is inequitable.¹¹

In Australia over the past decade or so we have seen a policy trend to favour mainstreaming over Indigenous-specific programs and, more recently, public sector provision over community-based delivery. These two trends have been justified by the powerful narrative of policy failure, and not by any evidence that such approaches deliver superior outcomes.

In my view an emphasis on mainstreaming might deliver citizenship entitlements, but such an emphasis will neglect Indigenous rights, and importantly, the Indigenous right to be different. It is for this reason that provisions in the Constitution that allows the Commonwealth to make laws for Indigenous people, and the Racial Discrimination Act (RDA) that allows special beneficial measures to be implemented are so important to Indigenous people; and conversely why the suspension of the RDA in the NTER Intervention is so confronting. This is especially because—unlike other settler majority colonial states such as the United States, Canada and New Zealand—there are no constitutional guarantees protecting inherent Indigenous rights, treaties or human rights frameworks in Australia. The RDA is of fundamental practical and symbolic importance.

While the Council Of Australian Governments (COAG) communiqués of 2008 suggest that the Commonwealth and States and Territories are in unison or 'joined up' in Indigenous policy, there are some signs of emerging intergovernmental cracks that some might welcome. I note just two exemplars. First, the openness of the Victorian Government to a human rights based approach in its social policy agenda is evident in its support for a Victorian state-wide Indigenous Forum in October 2008 that delivered a communiqué to the Victorian Government on 11 March 2009.¹² The Victorian approach is looking to build a rights framework into all its policy settings, and is based on five human rights principles with the acronym PANEL: Participation of stakeholders, Accountability for results, Non-Discrimination for vulnerable groups, Empowerment of target groups, and Linkages to human rights standards.¹³ Second, the apparent rejection by the new Western Australian Government of the proposed school attendance/welfare reform trials in that State on the grounds that they are punitive and will impact negatively on child welfare.¹⁴ Both appear to re-activate the possibility for enhanced community engagement.

RDA:
Racial
Discrimination Act

COAG:
Council Of
Australian
Governments

WHAT ABOUT THE LEGACIES OR BACKLOGS?

Much of the Indigenous policy debate, whether based on a needs or rights approach, still fails to adequately consider how massive backlogs, the historical legacy of years of underspending, will be filled. The Apology speech made it clear that group compensation to the Stolen Generations would *not* be paid. But in truth we will never 'close the gap' unless we address historical legacy, be it for individual trauma or for group neglect. I am often asked what is the extent of the capital backlog faced by Indigenous communities at the national level, and the answer is that we simply do not know, but we do know that we *are* underspending—the standard of housing, primary health care facilities, primary and secondary schools and general social infrastructure in most remote communities is inadequate at best, third world at worst. At the start of the NTER Intervention I estimated that a minimum \$4 billion would be needed over five years in the Northern Territory alone.¹⁵ Such backlogs are most visible in some of the large remote Indigenous communities that the Commonwealth is now targeting for special treatment, although how these 26 communities have been selected (15 in the Northern Territory, 4 in Cape York, 3 in Western Australia, 2 in New South Wales and 2 in South Australia) is far from clear. Minister Macklin refers to these as being communities of 2–3,000 with a potential sustainable economic base.¹⁶ By my reckoning only six, at most, have a population of over 2,000. Picking winners in this way for multi-million dollar investments for remote service delivery is novel, but it is not necessarily equitable, especially given the earlier observation that there are over 1,200 discrete Indigenous communities.

WHAT ARE THE RESULTS OF THE NEW APPROACH TO DATE?

The emerging national Indigenous framework that I have described recognises need, is weak on rights—especially in the Northern Territory—and has made a recent policy shift to target shortfalls in selected communities. This approach—with specified targets outlined only a year ago and targeting community introduced just last month—is too new to critically evaluate. This is especially the case because baseline statistics against which performance can be gauged are not being collected. This was very evident in the report of the independent review of the NTER Intervention published last October,¹⁷ and also very evident in Kevin Rudd's Closing the Gap first annual report of February 2009 that noted 'achievements' in a number of areas, but mainly as inputs and nowhere as outcomes.¹⁸

In the absence of independent assessment of policy performance, together with a growing trend to report policy success in the popular media in an orchestrated manner, it is becoming harder and harder to gauge whether results are positive, negative or neutral. Such heightened contestation partly reflects the absence of consensus about the approach taken. It also reflects that the approach is owned and championed by the state, not by the people or Indigenous communities. It is not unusual to read a number of contradictory and highly contested views about a policy outcome, if not on the same day then strung out over just a few, with trial by media, rather than concrete evidence of success, appearing to influence the government's approach. I say 'appearing' quite deliberately, because lack of transparency about decision-making processes renders the media debates all the more visible and significant.

WHAT ABOUT THE LOOMING RECESSION?

As tough economic times loom, one might argue that a firm commitment to a needs-based framework will be of benefit to Indigenous Australians, especially if the Rudd Government's Closing the Gap commitment actually extends to counter-cyclically closing the employment gap. My colleague Boyd Hunter suggests, optimistically, that the different industry distribution for Indigenous and non-Indigenous employment might see the downturn have less impact on Indigenous employed. On the other hand, he notes that

Indigenous unemployed are more likely to be discouraged work seekers than other Australians.¹⁹ In the period 2002 to 2007, the number of Indigenous employed increased by 20,000,²⁰ but as noted above, the Indigenous unemployment rate is still three times the non-Indigenous rate. One question that needs to be addressed is—how vulnerable these newly employed might be in the looming recession; will it be a case of last hired, first fired?

Even before the global financial crisis, the Rudd Government employment strategy for Indigenous people was rudimentary at best, given that the Closing the Gap employment target (which is actually a halving of the relative employment/population ratio) will need about 100,000 additional jobs within ten years.²¹ One element announced in the COAG communiqué last November was for an Indigenous economic participation package to assist 13,000 into employment.²² The other element was to rely on the Australian Employment Covenant devised by mining magnate Andrew Forrest, which aims to create 50,000 private sector jobs, initially in two years, now in an unspecified time-frame owing to the global financial crisis.²³ At the same time, the Rudd Government remains committed to dismantle the Community Development Employment Program that has been in place since 1977, and so move a minimum 17,000 participants from flexible, usually part-time, work to possible unemployment and welfare dependence.

The tension between mainstreaming and Indigenous specific approaches is very evident in the \$48 billion Nation Building and Jobs Plan that has no specific provisions for Indigenous people. In my view this stimulus package could very easily miss the neediest.²⁴ Given the marginal attachment of many Indigenous people to the labour market, one might have expected a comprehensive Indigenous employment and training package to meet the Closing the Gap goal and insulate Indigenous Australians from recession: none has been forthcoming. Perhaps as Tiga Bayles commented to me recently in a radio interview 'Indigenous people are well insulated from recession given that they always live with recession'?²⁵

CONCLUSION: WHAT CAN ACOSS DO?

The Rudd Government has made some progress since November 2007 in terms of dollar investments and joint Commonwealth/State commitments. It has also continued, and even enhanced, the previous government's approach that differentiates Indigenous citizens both from other Australians and from other Indigenous citizens on jurisdictional and racial criteria. In addition, it has recently introduced a new approach targeting particular communities for enhanced assistance. In my view, rapid progress will only be made when the national policy framework is significantly broadened to meet needs on an equitable basis, while recognising Indigenous difference and diversity, and addressing historical legacies. An approach based on needs alone, the so-called practical only, will be inadequate.

ACOSS's goals are to reduce poverty and inequality by developing and promoting socially, economically and environmentally responsible public policy and action by government, community and business while supporting NGOs which provide assistance to vulnerable Australians. I put forward the following five propositions to conference delegates in relation to Indigenous Australians:

1. ACOSS should advocate for the broader approach I propose based on equitably addressing needs, recognising rights, and meeting legacies—thus broadening the narrow one-dimensional needs-based approach of the Rudd Government;
2. ACOSS should advocate for a diversity of delivery approaches including community-based bottom-up or participatory approaches rather than the top-down and at times paternalistic public intervention that is currently dominant—we need to document and support Indigenous aspirations in all their diversity;

3. ACOSS should advocate for an approach predicated on community partnerships and giving community voice rather than the current approach that is seeing multi-year commitments being decided in agreements between the Commonwealth, States and Territories with minimal, or just some privileged, input from Indigenous voices;
4. ACOSS should advocate for common sense approaches that support what works, that openly quantifies what is needed, that tracks what is being achieved and that ensures transparency in all Indigenous policy processes; and finally
5. ACOSS should advocate for an approach that fundamentally respects human rights in accord with international requirements, especially at a time when Australia is on the eve of endorsing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

NOTES

1. See for example the 'Apology to Australia's Indigenous Peoples' speech, 13 February 2008, available at <http://www.pm.gov.au/media/speech/2008/speech_0073.cfm>.
2. See Council of Australian Governments (COAG), Communiqués during 2008, especially <http://www.coag.gov.au/coag_meeting_outcomes/2008-11-29/>.
3. A point emphasised in the paper 'Beyond Closing the Gap', presented at the *Values and Public Policy: Fairness, Diversity and Social Change Conference*, Melbourne, 26/27 February 2009. Conference hosted by the Centre for Public Policy, Melbourne University, available at <<http://www.public-policy.unimelb.edu.au/conference09/Altman.pdf>>.
4. See Council of Australian Governments (COAG) communiqués in 2008, especially <http://www.coag.gov.au/coag_meeting_outcomes/2008-11-29/>.
5. See the Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Population Distribution Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians*, 2006, available at <<http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Latestproducts/4705.0Appendix22006?opendocument&tabname=Notes&prodno=4705.0&issue=2006&num=&view>>.
6. Jon Altman, Geoff Buchanan and Libby Larsen, 'The environmental significance of the Indigenous estate: Natural resource management as economic development in remote Australia', *CAEPR Discussion Paper No. 286/2007*, available at <http://www.anu.edu.au/caepr/Publications/DP/2007_DP286.pdf>.
7. See the Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Housing and Infrastructure in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities*, 2006 (reissue), available at <[http://www.ausstats.abs.gov.au/ausstats/subscriber.nsf/0/E4705677FB7487A2CA2572BF001962CE/\\$File/47100_2006%20\(Reissue\).pdf](http://www.ausstats.abs.gov.au/ausstats/subscriber.nsf/0/E4705677FB7487A2CA2572BF001962CE/$File/47100_2006%20(Reissue).pdf)>.
8. Jon Altman, Nicholas Biddle and Boyd Hunter, "How realistic are the prospects for 'closing the gaps' in socioeconomic outcomes for Indigenous Australians?", *CAEPR Discussion Paper No. 287/2008*, available at <http://www.anu.edu.au/caepr/Publications/DP/2008_DP287.pdf>.
9. Nicholas Biddle, 'Ranking Regions: Revisiting an Index of Relative Indigenous Socioeconomic Outcomes', *CAEPR Working Paper No. 50/2009*, available at <<http://www.anu.edu.au/caepr/Publications/WP/CAEPRWP50.pdf>>.

10. John Gardiner-Garden, 'Commonwealth Indigenous-specific expenditure 1968–2008', Commonwealth Parliamentary Library, *Research Paper No. 10 2008–09*, available at <<http://www.aph.gov.au/Library/Pubs/rp/2008-09/09rp10.pdf>>.
11. See for example Deeble, J., Mathers, C., Smith, L., Goss, J., Webb, R., and Smith, V. (1998) *Expenditure on Health Services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People*, Department of Health and Community Services, Canberra; Neutze, M., Sanders, W., and Jones, G. (1999) 'Public Expenditure on Services for Aboriginal People: Education, Employment, Health and Housing', *Discussion Paper Number 24*, The Australia Institute, Canberra; Commonwealth Grants Commission (2001) *The Indigenous Funding Inquiry*, Commonwealth Grants Commission, Canberra.
12. See Victorian Statewide Indigenous Forum 16–17 October 2008, 'Communiqué Presented to the Victorian Government by the Victorian Aboriginal Community', 11 March 2009, available at <[http://www.aboriginalaffairs.vic.gov.au/Web14/dvc/rwpgslib.nsf/GraphicFiles/Statewide+Indigenous+Forum+2008+Communiqué+PDF/\\$file/FINAL+Communique+11+March+2009.pdf](http://www.aboriginalaffairs.vic.gov.au/Web14/dvc/rwpgslib.nsf/GraphicFiles/Statewide+Indigenous+Forum+2008+Communiqué+PDF/$file/FINAL+Communique+11+March+2009.pdf)>.
13. Helen Szoke, 'Recognising resilience and rights' presented at the *Values and Public Policy: Fairness, Diversity and Social Change Conference*, 26/27 February 2009. Conference hosted by the Centre for Public Policy, Melbourne University, available at <<http://www.public-policy.unimelb.edu.au/conference09/Szoke.pdf>>.
14. Alana Buckley-Carr, 'State blocks no school, no welfare program', *The West Australian*, 16 February 2009, available at <<http://www.thewest.com.au/default.aspx?MenuID=77&ContentID=124913>>; also The Australian Greens media statement, 'Greens welcome WA Government's cooling on truancy trials', 14 February 2009, available at <<http://rachel-siewert.greensmps.org.au/content/media-release/greens-welcome-wa-government%E2%80%99s-cooling-truancy-trials>>.
15. Jon Altman, 'Stabilise, normalise and exit = \$4 billion', *CAEPR Topical Issue No. 8/2007*, available at <http://www.anu.edu.au/caepr/Publications/topical/Altman_Costing.pdf>.
16. See Jenny Macklin's media statement, 'Remote Indigenous housing investment' 23 March 2009, available at <http://www.jennymacklin.fahcsia.gov.au/internet/jennymacklin.nsf/content/remote_indigenous_housing_23mar2009.htm>; <http://www.jennymacklin.fahcsia.gov.au/internet/jennymacklin.nsf/content/wa_alcohol_restrictions.htm>; also Council of Australian Governments (COAG) Communiqué 29 November 2008, <http://www.coag.gov.au/coag_meeting_outcomes/2008-11-29/>.
17. Peter Yu, Marcia Ella-Duncan and Bill Gray, *Report of the NTER Review Board – October 2008*, available at <http://www.nterreview.gov.au/docs/report_nter_review/default.htm>.
18. Australian Government, *Closing the Gap on Indigenous Disadvantage: The Challenge for Australia*, 27 February 2009, available at <http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/indigenous/closing_the_gap/default.htm>.
19. B. Hunter 'Prospects for closing the gap in a recession: Revisiting the role of macroeconomic factors in Indigenous employment', *CAEPR Topical Issue No. 1/2009*, available at <http://www.anu.edu.au/caepr/Publications/topical/Hunter_Recession_0109.pdf>.
20. See the Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Labour Force Characteristics of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians*, 2007, available at <[http://www.ausstats.abs.gov.au/ausstats/subscriber.nsf/0/F6AE80CEC4FD6F5FCA257450001581EB/\\$File/62870_2007.pdf](http://www.ausstats.abs.gov.au/ausstats/subscriber.nsf/0/F6AE80CEC4FD6F5FCA257450001581EB/$File/62870_2007.pdf)>.

21. Nicholas Biddle, John Taylor, and Mandy Yap, 'Indigenous Participation in Regional Labour Markets', 2001–06, *CAEPR Discussion Paper 288/2008*, available at http://www.anu.edu.au/caepr/Publications/DP/2008_DP288.pdf.
22. See Council of Australian Governments (COAG), Communiqué 29 November 2008, available at http://www.coag.gov.au/coag_meeting_outcomes/2008-11-29/.
23. Australian Government, Joint Media Release, Brendan O'Connor and Jenny Macklin, 'Government Welcomes Australian Employment Covenant', 30 October 2008, available at http://www.pm.gov.au/media/release/2008/media_release_0574.cfm.
24. Jon Altman, submission to the Inquiry into the Nation Building and Jobs Plan, Senate Finance and Public Administration Committee, 10 February 2009, available at http://www.aph.gov.au/Senate/committee/fapa_ctte/stimulus_package/submissions/sub30.pdf.
25. Tiga Bayles (journalist) interviewing Jon Altman on 98.9FM (Brisbane) Radio, *Let's Talk*, 11 March 2009. Available to download or listen at http://989fm.com.au/index.php?option=com_wrapper&Itemid=29.